

6/ The head of architecture - architecture of the head



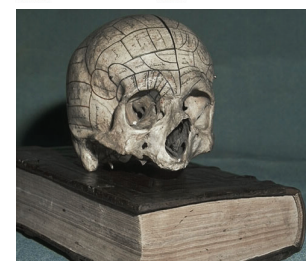
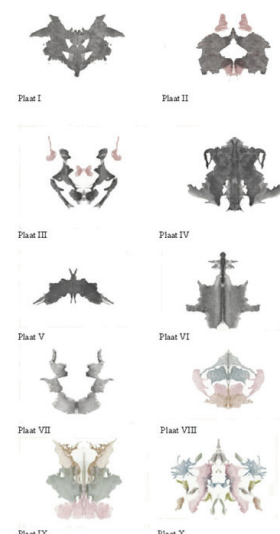
(Above)
Public stairwell
Detail of electrical conduit
Corridor of the three rooms
View of one of the servants' rooms
Paris (75)

How does the subject's head function? Beliefs and grand narratives help to construct modes of thought, representation and understanding of the world. What does the head contain? It sometimes appears to me as one of the places where man has attempted to impose order in a thousand different ways. Religions, Cartesianism, Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis... Each system has carved an understanding from the inside of our heads, to varying degrees of orderliness and rigidity. So much so that today our mind seems shaped by a thousand interlocking assumptions, each relying on the other to form our representation of consciousness. Our understanding of the inside of the head is an architecture. A systemic construction in which things make sense. Conversely, our ways of understanding our heads have consequences for architecture. They are its regulatory principles. Deism and rationalism saw their understanding translated into the construction of the territory. Architecture could be read as a fulfilment of thought, its built consequence. *The project for Madame S., a psychoanalyst, was elaborated on this reading of the links between the order of the head and the architectural order. It aspires to a spatial translation of the concatenation of the various systems of thought at work in the Western mind.* Reason guides one part of our actions, psychoanalysis is concerned with our more obscure actions, the Rorschach test has left traces in our sinful thoughts, phrenology had the intuition of the functional areas of the brain, African art continues to embody "for us" that which frightens reason... Each of the embedded systems has made use of architecture. Each has forged close relations with it. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud saw the stairs as the symbol of the sexual act. Dogon symbolism sees the door and the lock as symbols of the union of the sexes, fertility and the sexual act.

Phrenology is a way of organising space into rooms or worlds nestled in drawers.

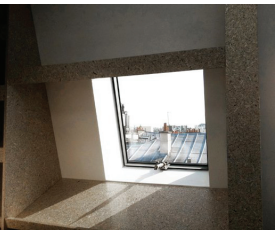
Why this analogy? Surely because Madame S. is a psychoanalyst. But it is above all because when one has climbed the building stairs, one feels detachment from the ground. The entire sky is just above the roof. The noise of the city fades. The

Rorschach diagrams
Skull marked with phrenological zones
Sources: Wikipedia



View of one of the three servants' rooms - Before construction
Paris (75)



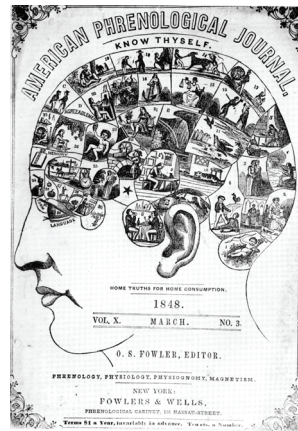


(Above)
View of the glass roof and writing
desk from the mezzanine
Steps / storage units
View of the writing desk and
rooftops of Paris
View of the bathtub and kitchen
Paris, France (75)

electrical grid is less well looked after, it blends in poorly among the ceiling mouldings. Upon entering the hall one finds three small rooms that the project is supposed to join up. Each room is a little world of its own, with an eye on the outside.

The whiteness of the walls and the black and white grid of the lino create the overall atmosphere of a sanatorium, or even of solitary confinement, the space of the mind. We are in the head of this building, from which one is given to observing the world in a detached manner. Once joined up, the different rooms of this apartment will have seven holes, seven openings onto the outside, like in a head. *The apartment will thereby work as an aggregate, a cubist portrait of the various worlds at work in our Western heads. In this way, the rue Sampaix project is organised around detachable worlds in the manner of the parts of the brain that cerebral activity has just stimulated. The shower, seating, bed and storage spaces jut out from the ceiling, the floor and the walls, endowing this space with the ability to concentrate on one activity or another. It is as if we were in a world where the head took precedence over the body and reason. A world in which objects were not functions loaded with metaphors or symbolic values, but symbolic values loaded with objects.*

Thus, each architectural element is not solicited for its function but in the first place for its history, its symbolic charge. Here, a mirror is first of all the psyche, the heating is above all the stove beside which Descartes pondered his philosophy, a lock is of itself a sensual and fertile world, a high, upholstered, niche is a haven for our transient follies, a tiling pattern is a repetition of the Rorschach figures. And in this reversal we rediscover unsuspected marvels in the vocabulary of architecture. Behind the abstract terms of the Academy of Architecture nobly borrowed from the "Italian model": listel, astragal, cornice and so on. A pagan language of architecture had existed far earlier: soul, beard, one-eyed, mouth, arm, decay, bald, hairy, ankle, heart, conscience, rib, neck, elbow, thigh, tooth, femur, knee, throat, hip, leg, cheek, tear, lip, lobe, jaw, hands, nipple... are all building terms that are still used and that still coexist in the Western mind alongside the most abstract mathematical models.



American Phrenological Journal - 1848
Source: Wikipedia

View of ladder leading to the mezzanine
Paris, France (75)





*Interior 3D simulation of fabricated furniture
Paris, France (75)*

*(Left to right) Dogon door lock, door lock of
bathroom in positions open and closed
Paris, France (75)*



*0103 Creation of an apartment and
glass roof in Paris, France (75)
Net floor area: 25 m²
Private client
Completion date of construction:
July 2011*

*Structural survey:
Dominique Piquery*

*All-trades contractor:
Entreprise REMS
Demolition
Carpentry
Exterior woodwork
Plumbing
Electricity*

*Interior woodwork contractor:
Lequien*



*Details of the glazed windows of the shower door
Paris, France (75)*